

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-15

INFO OCT-01 CCO-00 SSO-00 ISO-00 H-01 NSC-05 NSCE-00 /022 R

DRAFTED BY S:MCVICK:CV

APPROVED BY S - MR. EAGLEBURGER

S/S -REWOODS

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O 062333Z MAR 75 ZFF4

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

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TOSEC 83

E.O. 11652: N/A

OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

SUBJECT: LETTER FROM CONGRESSMAN LEE HAMILTON

FOR BORG FOR THE SECRETARY

1. THE FOLLOWING LETTER CONCERNING A NEW DIALOGUE BETWEEN CONGRESS AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH ON FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS WAS RECEIVED FROM CONGRESSMAN LEE H. HAMILTON (COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS) MARCH 6, 1975.

2. BEGIN TEXT: DEAR MR. SECRETARY: IN THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS, BOTH PRESIDENT FORD AND YOURSELF, AMONG OTHER OFFICIALS OF THE GOVERNMENT, HAVE CALLED FOR A NEW DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CONGRESS AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH ON FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS. THIS LETTER IS AN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM AND OFFER SOME SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW TO IMPROVE THE DIALOGUE. IT IS OFFERED BECAUSE OF MY BELIEF THAT IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE AND THE CONGRESS WILL BETTER FOCUS OUR FOREIGN POLICY DISCUSSIONS AND SOFTEN SOME OF THE ABRASIVENESS THAT

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SOMETIMES ERUPTS.

3. I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION THREE ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM THAT SEEM TO EXIST IN DEALINGS BETWEEN MEMBERS AND OFFICIALS OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT:

4. (A) THE APPROACH OF EACH SIDE TO EACH ENCOUNTER IS USUALLY QUITE DIFFERENT. MEMBERS INVARIABLY SEE FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS IN TERMS OF PRESSING QUESTIONS OF THAT PARTICULAR DAY -- QUESTIONS THEY HAVE TO ANSWER TO THE PRESS AND CONSTITUENTS. OFFICIALS OF STATE OFTEN APPROACH MEETINGS WITH MEMBERS SEEKING TO AVOID CONTROVERSY AND THE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS ON CURRENT CRISES AND TRYING TO PRESENT MEMBERS WITH A POLISHED, GENERAL CAPSULATION OF A FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEM. CONTROVERSY IS SOMETHING TO BE AVOIDED BY DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS, NOT MET HEAD ON, IT APPEARS.

5. (B) STATE OFFICIALS TOO OFTEN BELIEVE THAT THEY CAN COVER CONGRESS ON SOME PARTICULAR ISSUE BY SEEING THE CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP OR A FEW MEMBERS WHO HAVE SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ITEMS UNDER DISCUSSION, BUT OFTEN THESE LEADERS ARE NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED OR CONCERNED WITH THE DEBATE IN CONGRESS ON THE MATTER. MEMBERS WHO HAVE A SPECIFIC INTEREST IN THE MATTER ARE OFTEN NOT CONSULTED.

6. (C) THE FORUMS OFTEN CHOSEN BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT FOR MEETINGS ARE SIMPLY NOT REACHING ENOUGH MEMBERS. FAULT HERE EXISTS ON BOTH SIDES. MEMBERS OFTEN AGREE IN PRINCIPLE TO ATTEND BRIEFINGS BUT FAIL TO DO SO BECAUSE SCHEDULES TIGHTEN UP AT THE LAST MINUTE. STATE OFFICIALS APPROACH SUCH MEETINGS WITH THE TYPE OF GENERAL STATEMENTS MENTIONED ABOVE, OFTEN NOT ALLOWING ENOUGH TIME FOR QUESTIONS AND THEREBY ENCOURAGING SMALLER ATTENDANCE.

7. THERE IS NO EASY SOLUTION TO THESE PROBLEMS, BUT I THINK IT IS POSSIBLE TO DEVISE METHODS FOR IMPROVING CONTACTS BETWEEN STATE OFFICIALS AND MEMBERS AND DEVELOPING DIALOGUES ON A BROAD RANGE OF FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES. SUCH EFFORTS WILL DEMAND MORE WORK ON BOTH SIDES AND WILL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOT REMOVE MANY OF THE SPECIFIC FOREIGN POLICY DISPUTES THAT EXIST, BUT I BELIEVE THAT WE CAN, AT LEAST, INSURE THAT IMPORTANT ISSUES ARE BETTER UNDERSTOOD AND SOME POTENTIAL PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED AT AN EARLY STAGE AND REDUCED IN SEVERITY.

8. I WOULD SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING CHANGES:

9. (A) STATE OFFICIALS SHOULD WORK THROUGH SOME OF THE EXISTING GROUPS ON CAPITOL HILL IN A SYSTEMATIC AND COHERENT FASHION. FOR EXAMPLE, THE HEAD OF THE NEA BUREAU SHOULD, AS A MATTER OF COURSE, SEEK TO MEET WITH THE NEW YORK DELEGATION WHICH MEETS REGULARLY AND THE TEXAS DELEGATION SHOULD MEET WITH LATIN AMERICAN AREA OFFICIALS. OTHER EXISTING GROUPS, THE WEDNESDAY GROUP, THE DSG, THE FRESHMAN CLASS, STATE DELEGATIONS, VARIOUS CAUCUS PANELS AND OTHER GROUPS THAT MEET REGULARLY COULD OFFER FORUMS FOR DISCUSSING FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES.

10. (B) THE WEDNESDAY MORNING BRIEFINGS SHOULD BE CONTINUED ON A REGULAR BASIS. WHILE ATTENDANCE AT THEM HAS BEEN UNEVEN, THERE ARE SEVERAL REGULAR ATTENDEES. THEY SHOULD BE CONSULTED BY STATE OFFICIALS ON HOW TO INCREASE ATTENDANCE, DETERMINE TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED AND DEVISE FORMATS FOR THE MEETINGS. MORE TIME AT THESE MEETINGS IS NEEDED FOR QUESTIONING, AND MORE EFFORT MUST BE MADE BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT BRIEFERS TO DEAL WITH MATTERS OF TOPICAL INTEREST AND THE QUOTE FLASH POINTS UNQUOTE OF THAT TOPIC. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR MEMBERS SHOULD BE PASSED OUT AS A PART OF THE PROCEDURES.

11. (C) DIFFICULT FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS AND CRISES NEED TO BE DISCUSSED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER THEY HAVE ERUPTED OR HIT THE PRESS. SUCH DISCUSSIONS CANNOT ALWAYS AWAIT POLICY REVIEWS IN THE DEPARTMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH WAS SLOW IN COMING TO CONGRESS AND CONCERNED MEMBERS TO DISCUSS THE DEVELOPING CRISIS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN LAST SUMMER, AND I HAVE YET TO SEE AN EFFORT TO BRIEF MEMBERS IN A GENERAL SESSION ON THE ETHIOPIAN CRISIS. MEMBERS USUALLY HAVE TO REACT TO CRISES BEFORE POLICY REVIEWS ARE COMPLETED. IN THESE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INSTANCES, STATE OFFICIALS WOULD BE EXPECTED, NOT TO DIVULGE FUTURE POLICY, BUT TO DELINEATE THE PROBLEM AND SOME POSSIBLE OPTIONS AVAILABLE. MEMBERS WOULD THEN BE BETTER PREPARED AND EDUCATED ON THE ISSUE.

12. (D) THE GROUP OF MEMBERS CONSULTED ON IMMINENT FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS, DETERMINATIONS AND STATEMENTS NEEDS TO BE EXPANDED. STATE OFFICIALS NEED TO CONSULT NOT ONLY MEMBERS WITH SOME LEGISLATIVE OR OVERSIGHT RESPONSIBILITY IN THE GEOGRAPHIC OR FUNCTIONAL AREA WHERE A DECISION IS BEING MADE BUT MEMBERS WHO HAVE EXPRESSED ANY VIEWS ON THE ISSUE. THE BEST SOURCES FOR DEVELOPING A LIST OF THE MEMBERS TO BE CONTACTED IS TO ASK THE MEMBERS THEMSELVES AND TO WATCH THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD FOR STATEMENTS.

13. (E) UNDER SECRETARIES AND ASSISTANT SECRETARIES OF STATE NEED TO HAVE FAR MORE EXPOSURE ON THE HILL THAN THEY CURRENTLY HAVE, ESPECIALLY IN SMALL, INFORMAL GROUPS. IT IS AT THAT LEVEL THAT LASTING AND BENEFICIAL BRIDGES ARE GOING TO BE DEVELOPED BEST. MORE FORMAL SESSIONS WITH TOP STATE OFFICIALS, INCLUDING YOURSELF, CAN ONLY BE FEW IN NUMBER BECAUSE OF PRESSURES ON YOUR TIME AND THEY ARE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR FREQUENT DIALOGUES WITH BUREAU HEADS. IN ADDITION, CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO OFFERING MORE REGULARIZED MEETINGS BETWEEN STATE OFFICIALS AND MEMBERS' STAFF AIDES.

14. (F) I THINK THAT MANY STATE OFFICIALS WHO ARE MEETING WITH MEMBERS NEED TO REALIZE THE NECESSITY AND UTILITY OF A PARTICULAR WAY OF APPROACHING MEMBERS. CONGRESSPERSONS ARE ALWAYS HAVING TO DEAL WITH PRESSING, DAILY FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEMS. IN MEETINGS THEY NEED TO HIT THOSE ISSUES DIRECTLY IN ORDER TO PREPARE THEMSELVES FOR ANSWERING QUERIES AND DEVELOPING POSITIONS. STATE OFFICIALS SHOULD TRY TO KEEP THE NEEDS OF MEMBERS IN MIND IN ALL CONTACTS. THIS WILL SAVE TIME, POSSIBLE EMBARRASSMENT AND DISENCHANTMENT FOR ALL CONCERNED. THERE NEEDS TO BE A WAY TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE REFLECTIVE APPROACH OF MANY STATE OFFICIALS AND THE CRISIS ORIENTATION OF MOST MEMBERS.
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15. (G) FINALLY, THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR YOUR AVAILABILITY, REALIZING THAT PRESSURES ON YOUR TIME ARE GREAT. IN ADDITION TO YOUR APPEARANCES BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU APPEAR SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR (PERHAPS EVERY THREE OR FOUR MONTHS) IN A MEETING OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS -- NOT SO MUCH FOR A SPEECH, BUT TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS. SUCH MEETINGS NEED NOT FOCUS ON ANY PARTICULAR FOREIGN POLICY PROBLEM.

16. I APPRECIATE YOUR CONSIDERATION OF THESE SUGGESTIONS AND HOPE THAT, THROUGH AN ONGOING DIALOGUE ON THIS IMPORTANT MATTER, MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT WILL BE ABLE TO DEVELOP A NEW AND BETTER PARTNERSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING OF EACH OTHER'S FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS.

17. WITH BEST REGARDS. SINCERELY YOURS, LEE H. HAMILTON,
CHAIRMAN, SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS. END TEXT

18. AMBASSADOR MCCLOSKEY WILL SEND AN INTERIM REPLY TO CONGRESSMAN HAMILTON. INGERSOLL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE051187
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: MCVICK:CV
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750079-0482
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750374/aaaacpdh.tel
Line Count: 223
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <04 NOV 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LETTER FROM CONGRESSMAN LEE HAMILTON FOR BORG FOR THE SECRETARY
TAGS: OVIP, (KISSINGER, HENRY A)
To: LONDON
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006